



Metaphysical Media: The Occult Experience in Popular Culture

Associate Professor Emily D. Edwards Ph.D.

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Considered sinister by Western religious traditions and bizarre in mainstream America, supernatural beliefs and the rituals of occult traditions are often publicly disparaged. But they are paradoxically embraced and exposed by popular culture, in television shows such as *Bewitched* and in movies from *The Wizard of Oz* to *The Craft*, according to Emily D. Edwards. *Metaphysical Media: The Occult Experience in Popular Culture* is an in-depth discussion of the media's presentation of a wide spectrum of the occult that also serves as a comprehensive sourcebook of movies and television programs that deal with supernatural characters and themes.

Metaphysical Media focuses on the blurred definitions of topics associated with the occult as they are presented in popular culture to show moving-image media as devices that help structure an understanding of the supernatural world. Edwards examines what media treatment of supernatural subjects and the very characteristics of the media themselves reveal about the persistence of the occult. She maintains that popular art has always had a close association with the paranormal or supernatural—sometimes in illustration of an ideology, sometimes in ridicule of it, and sometimes as invocation itself.

Beginning with an overview of the role of the media in contemporary society and in its use of the occult, *Metaphysical Media* looks at the properties of media technology that extend human senses beyond biological boundaries. Edwards then discusses specific media treatment of topics related to the occult, including witchcraft, atavism, reincarnation, out-of-body experiences, and lycanthropy. She outlines the interplay of media and folklore regarding taboos about the handling of the dead and investigates media stories about creatures that cross the boundaries between human, beast, and god.

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